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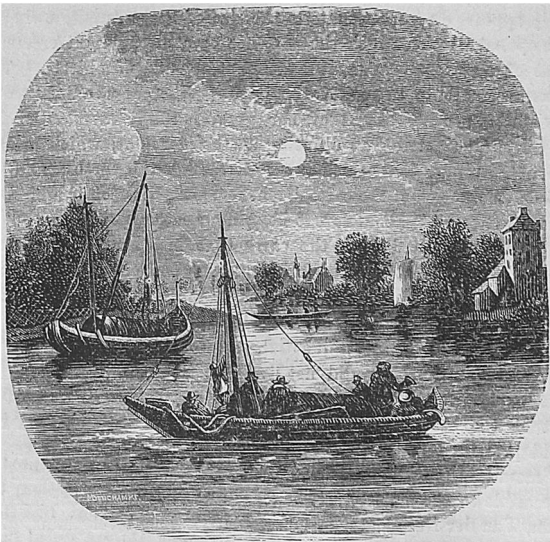
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ARENT, OR ARNOULD VAN DER NEER.



THERE is a constantly-recurring interest in an examination of the lives of Dutch painters. Apparently so similar, their diversity is



real and marked. No two of them are exactly alike. They are all, however, pervaded by a quiet domesticity which has peculiar charms.

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They please us in the same way that White, the historian of Selborne, delights us among writers. They are in general natural and true, even when their subjects are not always in good taste. In forming the artistic mind of modern times, it is to be wished that some of our painters would in this respect study the old men of Flanders, who sought to be true rather than brilliant. They idealised nature, they comprehended and rendered the poetry of landscape and still life, and yet they neither distorted it to serve a purpose, nor painted impossible oaks, nor trees which a naturalist would be puzzled to discover the name of.

The pictures of this school of artists have increased in value, and have been appreciated just in proportion as men have become observers of nature, and lovers of the simple and the beautiful. Mankind at first are dazzled by bright colours, an array of glitter and show quite foreign to reality; but as reason and sound conceptions make way, we are led to better notions of what is true and pure in art, as in other things.

This is pre-eminently true at the present time. Never, in the history of the world, was art more generally a favourite study. A taste for pictures, and pictures of a very high order of merit too, has penetrated to the ranks of the millions; but the painters of ordinary life are always more readily understood than those who take their subjects from past history. Martin is a painter whose name is familiar. His "Delshazzar's Feast" is looked upon with surprise, and almost with awe. But Landseer is understood, and more freely talked of.

The artist of whom we are about to treat is eminently calculated

to be popular; and yet, though his pictures are in so many great galleries, the greatest uncertainty exists with regard to him. We have not his portrait, and we do not exactly know his name. Some call him Art; others Arthur; some say Arnould; and the learned M. de Burtin baptises him by the name of Arent Van der Neer. We do not know with any precision either the date of his birth, or that of his death, or by what magic in study he succeeded in the rare and difficult art of rendering night effects with so much poetry and truth.

The historians of the day do not condescend to speak of him; and Descamps himself, who wrote at a period when the paintings of Van der Neer were already celebrated, has only given him two or three lines in a short biography of Eglog Van der Neer, speaking of the father *à propos* of the son, as if so eminent a landscape-painter were not worthy of a frame to himself.

Van der Neer was the painter of winters and fires; but he was also the painter of the melancholy beauty of night. He loved and studied night, of which the poet, Young, thus writes:—

“Night, sable goddess! from her ebon throne,
In rayless majesty, now stretches forth
Her leaden sceptre o’er a slumbering world:
Silence, how dead! and darkness, how profound!
Nor eye, nor list’ning ear an object finds;
Creation sleeps. ’Tis as the general pulse
Of life stood still, and nature made a pause—
An awful pause, prophetic of her end.”

The life of this solitary and unknown artist was passed wholly in contemplating landscapes sleeping ‘neath the moon, when it shows itself from behind a wooded hill, or when it rises behind a pool bordered by huts, or lined by a hamlet. From the first sign of twilight to that undecided and mysterious hour, which the delicate La Fontaine has painted so pleasingly in one line—

“Lorsque n’étant pas nuit, il n’est pas encore jour,”

when we observe passing before us, like a panorama in the sky, a slow and solemn succession of peaceful *tableaux*, which appear monotonous to the ordinary man who has only noticed them once, but which, to the judicious and romantic artist, present an infinite variety of effects and shades. We are familiar with artists who have improvised moonlight effects with ability, either by means of a few dashes of black and white pencil upon azure paper, or by some pencil-strokes learnt by heart, and cleverly dashed off upon a blue ground, with accessories of architecture, and some gently-rippling water. Those who have seen these rapid pencil sketches dashed off, will with difficulty be persuaded, at all events will scarcely understand, how Van der Neer has been able to see in the course of the night and in its aspects almost as much variety as Joseph Vernet in day effects—that he even noted the different hours of the night so distinctly, that on examination we can really recognise them. This is indeed what has made Van der Neer a painter of the very first order of merit in his peculiar way.

The study of the effects which are produced at night by lights and shadows has introduced into painting one of the great and successful charms of poetry, and that is mystery. Certain landscapes which, in the broad daylight, would have been completely wanting in interest, are wrapped at night in fantastic tints, are elevated to lofty proportions by the way in which the shadows stand and fall, and are idealised beneath the influence of those pale lights, which, no longer illumining and showing the ordinary life of man, make the earth appear more tranquil and great, and water more solemn and vast in its effect. What a picture does Shakespeare give us of moonlight!

“How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears; soft stillness, and the night,
Becomes the touches of sweet harmony.
Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold;
There’s not the smallest orb which thou behold’st,
But, in his motion, like an angel sings,
Still choiring to the young-eyed cherubim;
Such harmony is in immortal souls;
But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.”

We all know the effect of moonlight scenes upon our own individual emotions. If in the silence of the country we suddenly discover a little glimmer of light from the window of a hut; if presently, behind the distant trees of that sleeping landscape, we fancy we behold a cavalier gliding away like a ghost, how many emotions rise within us, and how ready are we to cry—

“What may this mean,
That thou, dead corse, again, in complete steel,
Revisit’st thus the glimpses of the moon,
Making night hideous; and we fools of nature
So horribly to shake our disposition
With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?”

Such a picture, and such a subject, finds us prepared to be interested and attentive. Why does that lamp burn at such an hour? Is it that some terrible drama is being prepared; or is there sickness—a watching mother, a babe near to death? No matter what; we are interested. And then why is that man creeping along as if afraid to be seen? Imagination—which would have been quite tranquil had such a thing been noted in the day—when “the moon is up, and yet it is not night,” for “sunset divides the sky with her,” is moved and warmed directly there appears that veil of mystery which always attends the movements of night. All seems to become greater, to be poetised under the influence of the moon; and though the earth is still, there is yet sufficient of motion and life in the quickly flying clouds, reflected on the surface of the river or in the deep bosom of the sea. What strange, majestic, and sublime spectacles do we sometimes see! Sometimes the moon advances, surrounded by a procession of light fleecy clouds, which shine as she borders them with a luminous fringe; at others, leaving her court far behind, like a saddened and deserted queen, she crosses the vast plain of the air alone; sometimes, clearing her red and sulphurous disk from the vapour of the horizon, she hangs for a time suspended over a dark brown mass, until by degrees her azure forehead is quite cleared up, and she stands out upon the firmament whose dark azure is slightly dashed with green.

The moon has ever been the favourite subject of poetry; and never has it been better described than by Milton and others, whose words have suggested many a brilliant and successful picture. The crescent moon has been a favourite phase, because it presents a singular appearance in the sky. Under favourable circumstances, the whole lunar circle may be seen, the dark part appearing of somewhat smaller dimensions, in proportion to the illuminated. The appearance is popularly described as that of the new moon with the old one in her arms. It arises from the light reflected from the earth to the lunar surface; hence called *earthshine*; and *lumière cendrée* by the French, or ashy light, on account of its inferiority, in quantity and brightness, to that which is directly received from the sun. It only serves to render the unenlightened portion of the moon very faintly visible; and the dark part of her body appears disproportionate to the size of the crescent, owing to the optical illusion which the presence of a strong light creates—that of apparently augmenting the magnitude of objects. Two causes contribute to render the dark portion of the lunar disk invisible in other stages of her progress: the increase of her directly-illuminated part diffusing a stronger light, which proportionally nullifies that which is reflected from the earth; and the actual diminution of the earth itself. When the moon is a crescent to us, the earth is about full to her; and, consequently, more light is then transmitted from the earth than in other circumstances, which has the effect of then bringing that portion of her disk not exposed to the solar rays into feeble visibility. The effect is not produced when the moon is half full, owing to the cause, for the reason stated, being less influential.

Arent Van der Neer did not live in a land which was of itself much suited to the poetry of grand effects. Had he exercised his art on the borders of the Rhine, amid the accidents of flood and field presented by a varied style of landscape, with ruined castles on mountain-tops, he might readily have found landscapes naturally accessible to the majesty of night. But in Holland, near Amsterdam, Van der Neer had only before his eyes long level plains, great lakes surrounded by huts on a level with the water, common trees, and a lowering sky. Nevertheless, to this flat country Van der Neer succeeded in giving an interest quite poetical, when he painted

his moonlights; and with no other resource than clumps of trees, thatched roofs, and marshes, he had the art to produce pictures full of charm and sentiment. The Dutch easily recognise the villages he has painted. They are nearly all situated between the city of Amsterdam and that of Utrecht. As you leave the borders of the sea and approach Utrecht, you see, it is true, the fertility of the country increase, the canals are bordered by gardens, which are a kind of framework of verdure for them, vegetation is more abundant and more lively, the trees send forth more vigorous shoots, the meadows are of a brighter green, and the trelliswork of the avenues disappears under the weight of foliage. But though nature becomes brighter here to the eyes of the traveller, it still offers to the painter nothing but perspectives without life and without grandeur; and it required all the genius of Arent Van der Neer to render for ever celebrated pictures where the beauty of the model is so little compared with the power of art. One of the most famous is that which is called "The Van der Neer of Zamputz." That is the German name of a Dutch family called Van de Putte, for a long time naturalised at Cologne, to whom the picture belonged. It passed to the gallery of M. de Burtin, who has given us the following description of it, which is worthy of being read carefully, and which gives a very good idea of the general style of Van der Neer.

"It represents," says the amateur, "the village of Brambrugge, traversed by the Vecht, whose limpid and transparent waters are bordered on both sides by houses mixed up with trees as far as Nieuwersluis, from which we can see land in the distance far away in the horizon. Amid the numerous barks which ornament the river, we notice two sail-boats, one of which is drawn by a white horse, the driver of which is on its back; the other, full of passengers, is stopped near a wooden bridge over a piece of water communicating between the village and the Vecht, and from which the men gaze at the boats. Two boats are placed conspicuously in front, one with fishermen in it, the other with a peasant, who is ferrying over some oxen. Several trunks of trees lying on the ground, reeds on the edge of the water, willow fish reservoirs under the bridge, a stockade, and some trees which hide a part of the church and houses in the foreground, add beauty to this admirable composition, in which, despite the shades of night, nothing is black, nor cold, nor dry, as in many other works of this master; but, on the contrary, everything, even to the sky itself, is warm, clear, transparent, soft, harmonious, and of a charming velvety hue. The water reflects everything as in a mirror, and the light of the moon, shed upon the right of the river, produces a very pleasing and piquant contrast to the demi-tint of the left side."

This description, leaving out some details, is applicable to many pictures by Van der Neer. These landscapes have, in truth, a family likeness, from the elements of which they are composed. They are, in general, sheets of sleeping water gently rippled by the night wind, barks which serve as a set-off in the foreground, and villages, the streets of which are planted with trees, their tranquil and stumped masses being in contrast to the clearness of the star, which of itself makes up the drama of the picture. But if there is some monotony in the way in which Van der Neer composes his moonlights—we mean in the style of managing the lines, of distributing the masses of light and shade, and of arranging the different grounds—on the other hand, what variety is there in the tints, and how many shades delicately observed, distinguish landscapes so like one another at the first glance! Other painters have reproduced the same effects, while varying their models. Van der Neer, without scarcely changing his models, has infinitely varied the effects of his pencil, or rather his own impressions. Some particular village floating on the water, with its moored barks, fishermen's nets spread out in the foreground, and the wretched clothes which are drying on the bush, has often served as a subject for the landscape-painter. But, then, the village has been studied by the artist at different seasons of the year, and at different hours of the night. Sometimes the whole magic of his effects is concentrated in the west. While the earth, wrapped in deep shadows, is yet unable to participate in the light which is rising on the horizon, some few feeble rays, scarcely visible, escape from the upper part of the luminous disk, work their way between the boughs of the trees and the rustic boats, glide over the surface of the canal, and

break in sparkling pearls over every tiny wave raised by the motion of the wind. On other occasions, having attained its utmost height in the heavens, the moon looks down upon the prairies, the woods, and hamlets, of Van der Neer, and everywhere spreading its blue glimmer, forms a great layer of light over a similar layer of gloom. Often the same landscape passes through all the degrees of twilight, and appears indistinct and fantastic at that hour when, in the absence of the stars, a mysterious veil hangs over the country, and would make the dawn of day look like its setting, if a painter like Van der Neer did not know how to seize the exact shade which separates the fresh and silvery tones of morning from the golden and vigorous tones of evening—shades and tints which can be more readily recognised in his pictures than in the engravings, admirable as they are, of Jacques Philippe Lebas, of whom we shall speak more fully by-and-by.

Nature is, in some respects, like living beings. True painters readily represent her to themselves as a woman with passions, radiant joys, sadnesses, and moments of calm and uncasiness. Sometimes smiling and agitated, tempestuous and serene, she pleases, by her rapidly-changing caprices, those who really love her. Some love her melancholy, like Ruysdael; others delight in her merry moods, like Berghem. Van der Neer, while yielding to varied impressions, has followed the bent of his character, which impelled him to seek in nature only the variations of his sadder moods. Not only did he in preference choose her night-scenes, but in his day-scenes he preferred selecting the winter. Often to the melancholy of his moonlights he added the additional painful excitement of night fires. His finest picture of this kind—a picture which has made him illustrious—is that which is to be seen at Copenhagen, in the gallery of the king, representing a fire seen from the grand canal of Amsterdam. Nothing more solemn can well be conceived. Between the spectator and the fire are several bridges covered by people, and the agitated outline of the crowd is relieved admirably against the sinister light of the centre of the picture. The vague colours, the uncertainty of the distant masses, the indecision of forms—of those, at all events, which are not relieved with vigour upon the fire—and the depth of space—all contribute to make the picture seem larger than it is in reality. The houses of Amsterdam, arranged in perspective along the quays, and rendered with an exactness and a charm which are quite worthy of a Van der Heyden, give the idea of a considerable town, so that upon a small canvas the picture of the fire appears immense. On this occasion, the painter has cautiously refrained from attempting a struggle between two lights, by opposing a contrast between the vast blaze and the moon. To make a sublime picture, all he needs is the night and a fire. This is, then, truly the finest Van der Neer which can be seen. The fire effect is observed twice, in the town, and in the water of the canal, which ripples and shakes, resembling a running stream of hot lava. The flames sparkle, crackle, and produce a thousand piquant effects on the windows of the houses, and wherever the waters of the Amstel reflect the sparks; but all these brilliant details are admirably toned down, and the ensemble presents a spectacle so imposing, so dramatic, of such lugubrious beauty, so full of life, so full of grandeur and unity, that we are rarely more affected by any production in the history of art.

"Fire," says Valenciennes,* "does very well by night, when its light contrasts with that of the moon; but what is essential to produce a good effect is to paint water at the same time. Without water a landscape is dead, especially at night. Great tranquil masses admirably bring out the reflection of the moon and that of the natural or accidental fires which are introduced into a picture, like volcanic eruptions, torches, and burning houses. Nevertheless, if the eruption or the fire is too great, the effect of the moon will disappear, and in this case its light will only be accessory to the light of the fire which is to be represented. There is more charm in allowing the moonlight to predominate, and leaving the fire to be but a secondary effect."

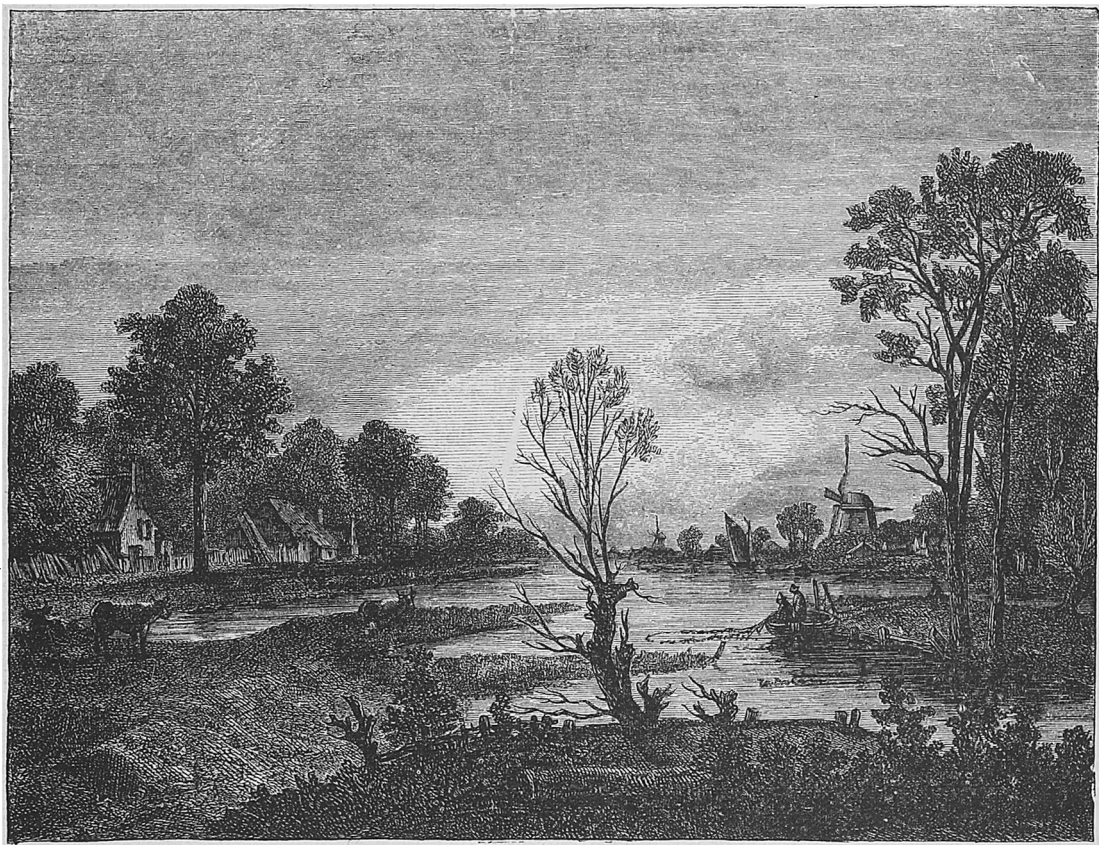
There is much sense in these reflections; and we could almost fancy that they were a kind of criticism on some works by Van

* "Elements de Perspective Pratique à l'usage des Artistes," with advice and reflections on painting and landscape. Paris, 1801-

der Neer, if the writer had not said a little before of this excellent and admirable landscape painter—"Van der Neer has scarcely painted anything but moonlights; and he has succeeded in rendering them with a charm, a transparency of tone and colour, and a warmth of tint, which give us great delight. His waters are limpid and deep, and of astonishing planimetry. In truth, we believe we can say that this painter has most fully succeeded in rendering such effects as those to which we allude."

A man, who loved nothing but silence and night, and who delighted in painting elegies of the moon, and who preferred the country when it was covered by ice, or feebly lit by poetic glimmerings of light,—such a man, we say, must have lived and died obscure. It is, therefore, not surprising that we know nothing of his private life, of his habits, nor of how he began to be a painter. Some have thought that Albert Cuyp was his master; but this is scarcely likely, if we recollect that Albert Cuyp often painted in the figures of Van der Neer's landscapes. It is very unlikely that

and which bears as its title, "The Life and Works of Dutch and Flemish Painters," has little to say of Van der Neer. "Some foreign writers fix the date of his birth," he says, "in 1619; others in 1613; and that of his death in 1683. With Huber,* we may allow that the time at which he flourished was 1660. These same writers, Pilkington and others, fancy that he was born at Amsterdam. It is beyond a doubt that he lived for a long time in this city—a great number of his landscapes, chiefly taken by moonlight, representing views of villages known to be in the neighbourhood of Amsterdam, and between that city and Utrecht. We find also, some similar views by him taken at sunrise, and during the day. But, in general, his paintings are moonlight effects, this being the style in which he excels, and, indeed, in which he has no equal. His pictures are composed of villages built on the borders of the water and near river-banks, where the moon is reflected on the water, and the scene is animated by ships, boats, and numerous figures. His skies are the parts in which he shows most art and



EVENING.—FROM A PAINTING BY VAN DER NEER.

the master, instead of taking his pupil for assistant and comrade, should become the assistant of the pupil; that is, that he should consent to embellish—by painting in the accessories—the pictures of one of his disciples. However this may be, and without denying that Albert Cuyp was strictly the master of Van der Neer, we believe that this landscape painter was seduced by the works of Elzeimer, which had been brought into Holland by a gentleman of Utrecht, the Count Palatine, Henri de Goudt; that he adopted and continued the traditions of this unfortunate painter; that, in fine, the love of study, and a passionate love of nature, did the rest. It is remarkable, moreover, that the Dutch historians, living in the country where Van der Neer flourished, and writing in our day, have found nothing new during two centuries to tell us about their countryman. Since Houbraken, who assures us that Arnould Van der Neer, in his youth, was major in the house of the lords Van Arkel, we must accept the theory that no new fact has come to light relative to the life of a painter so well known by his works. In fact, M. Immerzell, in the book he published in 1843, in Dutch,

beauty. His winters are also admirable and excellent representations of nature. They are very rich in composition. His colours are varied, his touch easy and prompt; and in all his pictures there is a harmony of tone which enchants. In former times, his pictures were found in abundance in Holland; and that is what explains why his talents—less common than his pictures—were not appreciated at their full value. Foreigners, taking advantage of the low prices at which the pictures of Van der Neer were sold, have not failed to fill their cabinets with them, and his works have now become exceedingly rare in Holland. They are now, therefore, sold for very high prices when they appear in public sales. In 1825, 'A Winter,' from the cabinet of M. Vranken van Lokeren, was sold for £120; it is now in England, in the possession of Mr. Henry Bevan. But another picture by the same master, engraved in the gallery of Lucien Bonaparte, under the title of

* Author of "Notices on Engravers and Painters." Dresden, 1787.

'Paese con Figure ed Animali' (Landscape with Figures and Animals), was sold by public auction at London, in 1837, for £808."

It is rather surprising that an Amsterdam writer, in order to trace the life of a Dutch painter, should be reduced to repeat what has been said about him by foreign writers. And what would have been the value of the memory of so many great painters, if they had not taken the trouble to raise monuments to themselves, and written their own history, in their masterpieces?

Winter and its icy plains, and its sad and dreary amusements, necessarily excited the attention of a painter who loved nature in her melancholy moods. But if Van der Neer is inimitable in his fies and his moonlights, he is not without a rival when he represents frozen canals, covered by sledges and skaters (p. 324). He may then be readily confounded with Isaac Ostade, his contemporary. Some naked trees, with a foliage of snow, mills, boats fast in the ice,

and making it fall on the subjects or the picture before and behind, and on the side, a little more faintly than in the representation of day; "in order that it may be taken for a true moonlight, and not for the light of the sun, which it greatly resembles in its sudden touches of light and its sharp shadows," with some stars shining in an azure sky, appearing here and there between the clouds. If we were to follow up the lessons of Lairesse, the moon would have to be supposed out of the picture, and it would only be from the flat masses, the decided and sharp outlines of shadow, and the full colour of the local colours, that we should make its presence felt in the sky, without exposing it to the eye. We should then have to weaken the reflections, which are never so intense by the cold light of the moon's rays as by the warm beams of the sun.

If beside these lessons of the learned professor, we place a fine night-scene of Van der Neer, we shall see how difficult it is to



THE RISING OF THE MOON.—FROM A PAINTING BY VAN DER NEER.

a crowd of skaters—some timid learners, motionless in their awkwardness, while others, launched out like arrows, cut the frozen mirror in straight lines, or turn in elegant and spiral curves on one foot. Such are nearly all his winters; and, if those of Arnould resemble those of Isaac, it is because the two masters, in their perfect *naïveté*, both resemble nature.

It is curious here to make a comparison—and perhaps we shall never find a better occasion for so doing—between the academic precepts of a professor and the examples furnished by an artist who allows himself simply to be guided by a sentiment of art. Gerard de Lairesse, in his "Grand Livre des Peintres," declares, that if he had to paint a moonlight, he would not conceive that he departed from truth by following the principles which he has indicated in his representations of the sun; that is to say, never introducing into a picture the luminary itself, but only its light;

establish absolute rules in painting. Sometimes, it is true, it has occurred to Van der Neer to hide the moon behind a clump of trees; but then we must say its effects deceive us; there, where he has endeavoured to render a bright night, we fancy we see twilight spreading over the earth after the setting of the sun. And nothing can possibly be more unfavourable to the force of the impression than this uncertainty in which we are left, as to the nature of the phenomenon we observe. Whatever Lairesse may say about its being more important to light up a picture than to bring in a luminous body, the first duty of the painter is to produce a lively and effective impression, and that it may be lively, it must be *one*, that is to say, there must exist in our minds no uncertainty, no indecision about the nature of the object represented, unless the vagueness of the scene is the intention, the poetry, as it were, of the picture, as is often the case with those of Rembrandt. When

viewing a landscape like those of Van der Neer, the spectator who is not able to say whether he is gazing at the dawn or at twilight, whether it is the sun which has just finished shining, or the moon which is just beginning to shine, must be also unable to feel the proper emotions which the painter intended he should experience. Besides, what becomes of the scene if the principal actor is left out? If the star is not introduced into the picture, the artist loses all those resources which he can derive from the arrangement of the sky, when the moon plays the first part in it. For it is to the firmament that the attention is first drawn in pictures of the night. There the drama of light is going on, and there is seen the movement of the clouds which appear to carry on the life of the earth that sleeps.

"I should like," adds Lairesse, "to render the lights more strong and the colours redder and yellower, to use torches, burning piles of wood, sacrifices, and other artificial lights, the shadows of which would be less defined than those of the moon. This, according to my view of things, would produce a very great effect, principally if these accidental lights were placed in obscure corners. But we must, above all, take care to throw over the whole more obscurity than light, and to introduce colours brighter than the sky."

To these observations of the learned professor, we prefer the simple piece of advice—to follow in all things the principles of unity. We may, doubtless, remain faithful to this principle, even if we introduce into a moonlight the fires of fishermen, the glare of torches, or any other artificial light, so that it be secondary and really subordinate, as is the case in many of the night effects of Joseph Vernet. But Van der Neer appears to us more expressive and more imposing, when, suppressing the contrasts which would attract the eye or occupy the mind, he brings down to us, in all their unity, the grand impressions produced by the spectacle of nature in the solemn hours of silence and of night.

There is in the feeling of melancholy a sweetness which appears, from their own confession, to have remained a long time unknown to the French. It is only of late years that the breath of the North has wafted to them its vague and romantic emotions. The consequence is, that the pictures of Ruysdael and of Van der Neer were never more highly appreciated, or better understood there, than they are now. Alfred Michiels thus speaks of them:—"What dreams, what wandering thoughts, rise in the mind when gazing on the canvas of Van der Neer. Above all, this painter loves the moonlight, and pictures it to us with magic ability. A slow, winding river flows through the picture. Tufts of reeds stick up along the banks; some buildings rise a little further off, and behind the huts we see the dentated line of the forest tops. The melancholy star silvers the surface of the wave; a brilliant train divides it; a pale light is reflected into the smallest creeks, now coating them with a light glazing of illumination, now giving them a frame of white. The clouds which surround the radiant orb are touched by different shades, and a dim, religious light falls over the darkness. The queen of night is the centre and the divinity of this obscure world, the forms of which would disappear without her. The genius of Goethe could not have invented anything better."

At the time when Van der Neer painted his silent and nocturnal landscapes, nobody in France would have thought of discovering any sentiment which might have moved the heart of the painter in his productions—nobody would have written such a page. These poetic ideas were beyond the intelligence of the rude, profligate, and warlike men of those days. They were gross and material in everything. They knew nothing of what old Montaigne so quaintly says, that to translate is to spoil: "*J'imagine qu'il y a quelque ombre de friandise et délicatesse au giron mesme de la melancholie!*"*

Bryan says: "Some place his birth in 1613, and it was said that he was living in 1691. The picture by Van der Neer and Cuyp, in the National Gallery, was offered for sale in Lucien Bonaparte's collection, and bought in at 360 guineas; at Erard's sale, at Paris, it was purchased by Lord Farnborough for more than

double that sum, and bequeathed by him to the nation." The same writer gives an account of a son, Eglon Hendrick Van der Neer, born in Amsterdam in 1643, who received his first instruction from his father; but his taste leading him to a different branch of the art, he was placed under the care of Jacob Van Loos, a painter of history and portraits at Amsterdam. When he was twenty years of age he went to Paris, where he passed four years and painted some small portraits and domestic subjects, which are generally admired. On his return to Holland, he attempted some historical and fabulous subjects, which have little to recommend them but delicacy of colour and careful finishing. He was more successful in his pictures of conversation and gallant subjects, which are tastefully composed and carefully drawn, in which he appears to have imitated the style of Terburg and Netscher. His pictures of this description are justly held in high estimation; they are very highly finished, and though less mellow and harmonious than those of Metz and Miéris, they are well coloured and touched with great delicacy.

Pictures by Van der Neer are very rare, and this necessarily adds to their value. Still there are some found in almost every museum in Europe, and in most of the celebrated private collections of France, England, and Germany.

The Louvre only possesses two pictures by this master:—

1. "A Border of a Canal in Holland." This is an evening effect. On the right are three cows, of which two are lying down near a boat; to the left is a row of trees and houses along the canal. In the foreground is a man leaning on some wooden pailings. Further off, we see a man impelling a boat along with a pole, and, among the houses, the spire of a church. We read on a plank to the right the monogram of the artist, *AV. DN.* The animals, says the catalogue, are ascribed to Albert Cuyp.

2. "A Village on the Road-side." To the right are houses on the borders of a canal, and in the foreground we see the reflection of the moon and some ducks; on the road are some fallen trees, a dog, and some figures; further on, a peasant, and a cavalier followed by a footman. To the left are trees and houses, surrounded by an open fence. At the foot of a tree is the monogram of the painter, *AV. DNER.* This picture was bought for the Louvre at the sale of M. de Monay, the 24th May, 1852, for £270.

Dresden Museum. Three Van der Neers:—1. A little landscape, representing some buildings on a lake. It is painted on wood. 2. A Dutch landscape. The day is falling; it is already moonlight. A river, the banks of which are bordered by trees and buildings, cuts the country in two. In the distance, a large town. 3. The fellow to this. A plain, water, barks, clouds, very admirably executed. The whole makes a magical moonlight effect. Both these are also on wood.

Pinacothek Museum of Munich. A fine large picture, representing a lake in the midst of a forest, the trees of which are reflected in the water. This picture proves that the most celebrated of moonlight painters was equally able to paint nature by daylight.

Belvedere Gallery at Vienna. "A Moonlight." We see a beautiful garden and a building on the banks of a river cut by dykes. In the distance is a town, near which some ships have cast anchor.

In the Copenhagen Gallery is "The Fire," to which we have already alluded.

Ducal Gallery of Gotha. There are here six pictures by Van der Neer. In this number is one with the monogram of the artist, and the date 1643. This is also a moonlight. On the foreground is a river, with a bridge. The second is a country site, lit up by the light of the setting sun. Of the four other pictures, the majority are night effects, with the monogram *M*, composed of the letters *AV. DN.* interwoven.

Her Majesty the Queen possesses a fine Van der Neer. It represents, as usual, the borders of a canal in Holland, with a night effect. We see a carriage and horses; to the right, a *château* surrounded by trees; in the background, a city.

Bridgewater Gallery, belonging to the Earl of Ellesmere. 1. "A Dutch View by Moonlight." 2. "A Dutch Village and Neighbourhood by Moonlight."

There are no Van der Neers, or were not recently, in either the collection of Sir Robert Peel, which is so rich in Dutch masters of the first class, or in the Grosvenor Gallery, or in the possession

* "I fancy there is some shade of daintiness and delicacy beside the fireside of melancholy itself."

of the Earl of Westminster, or the Marquis of Lansdowne, or the Duke of Sutherland.

A picture by Van der Neer, representing a winter scene, was in Mr. H. Beekford's gallery in London. M. Waagen speaks of it in his book on the arts of England as a prodigy of truth and transparency.

Goettingen Gallery, belonging to the famous university of that name, has one of the masterpieces of this painter: it is "A Fire."

In the famous collection of pictures of Winckler, of Leipsic, sold towards the commencement of the century, there was a "Winter" and two "Moonlights."

The pictures of Van der Neer, being all principal pictures aiming at effect, have been engraved, and by the best masters, in the landscape style. We find the list of engravings of this master in the catalogue of the celebrated Winckler Cabinet, the sale of which took place at Leipsic in 1801.

The prices of Van der Neer's pictures have been variously estimated:—

Sale de la Roque, 1745. "Landscape" painted on wood, representing a setting sun, the edge sculptured and gilded, £5.

Lebrun Sale, 1806. "A Moonlight, with a River," on which are two boats. To the right a fisherman's bark; the men drawing their nets. This picture was sold—it is scarcely credible—for £2. At the same sale, "A Landscape" by Moncheson, the figures by Adrian Van der Velde, was sold for £8 2s.

Cambry Sale, 1810. "A Dutch Site," with the perspective of a village to the left, and a river on the opposite side, £9.

Erard Sale, 1832. "Landscape by Moonlight." A marshy plain, with dwelling-houses to the left; on the right trees. A little enclosure, several roads, many trees, posts, a river, etc., £230.

Sale of Count C—, at Antwerp, 1842. "Skaters on the Amstel," £200.

Cardinal Fesch's Sale, 1845. A large "River," with a bark on it; several fishing-boats, a fine open country; some beautiful houses peeping through trees. On the foreground, three persons in a lane; the moon, a lovely sky, clouds exquisitely painted. 400 scudi (about £100).

Same sale. A "Winter." There are about a hundred figures skating on the icy river, beyond which is a large town with its steeples, occupying a considerable space of ground. All the different features of such a landscape admirably rendered. A poor man with a log. £41.

Sale of William II., King of Holland, 1850. "A Landscape," (Dutch) as usual, with a canal, moonlight, boats, and figures. A fine night effect. 1000 florins.

Montcalm Sale. "Moonlight," £360.

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JACQUES PHILIPPE LEBAS.

We have already alluded, in our biography of Van der Neer, to this eminent man. A sketch of his life will be interesting—the more, that it was considerably chequered by events of an amusing character. Son of a *maitre-perruquier*, or hairdresser, Lebas was born in Paris, on the 8th of July, 1707. His mother, having become a widow, had no resource but the interest of the sum derived from the sale of her husband's business, which brought her in about six pounds sterling a year. On this, it will be readily understood, she could scarcely exist with her child. Certainly, she could not send him to school. All the education he had, was simply learning the letters of the alphabet; and Lebas often, in after-life, would express his gratitude to the merchants and artisans of the city of Paris, whose signs and names over their doors had been his first spelling-books. The mother of Lebas, seeing that he had a natural aptitude for drawing, placed him with an architectural engraver, named Herisset, of very ordinary talents. For a young apprentice, full of fire and hot blood, this cold, geometrical work

was very unsuitable. Fortunately, Lebas having one day met with some engravings by Gerard Audran, was at once struck with the true character of his own genius. He seemed to foresee his destiny; and, despite the ardour of his temperament, he resolved to acquire all the qualities necessary to an engraver—the first of which, undoubtedly, is patience. At the age of fourteen, his mother took him to an old-clothes man, and dressed him from head to foot, before launching him upon the world. But how was he to make himself known? and how to get work without being a little known? This is the eternal circle in which the early genius fires and fumes. People will not employ him because he is not known; and yet all must be tried before they gain renown. Poor Jacques Philippe had no credit, no protector—unless we regard his indefatigable activity, and his ambition to be one day a celebrated artist, and the feeling within him that he is destined to be so, as his safeguard and impulse to that arduous exertion, which was his characteristic through life.

In these days flourished the Drevets, the Cars, the Dupins, the Ducanges, and the Cochins. The eighteenth century was a fine time for engraving. Everybody was trying to beat others in bringing out splendid publications adorned by plates—series of portraits, books of art, of science, and books of travels—illustrated in a very magnificent style. The richer nobility who possessed pictures, began to engrave them—some to give more value to their collections—most of them to encourage artists, who were then, with literary, learned men, and philosophers, at the head of French society. Lebas had a few plates to execute for the Crozat gallery. The first was "The Preaching of St. John the Baptist," which was executed in the broad, vigorous, and admirable manner of Gerard Audran, by whom the youth had been so marvellously struck. "Roman Charity," after Noel Nicolas Coypel, and an engraving after Paul Veronese, completed his *débuts*. He was not as yet a master in style, and yet his "Roman Charity" is engraved in a good and striking way, which leaves little to be desired. The work was executed according to the laws of perspective; that is to say, with that lightness of tint which leaves the distant figures on their proper ground and which it is difficult to attain to with an instrument so precise as the burin. Coypel was so delighted with his engraver, that he insisted on Crozat's giving him double the price agreed on.

Jacques Philippe Lebas was of a warm, passionate, impetuous, and singularly impulsive nature. At the age of twenty-six, he thought of getting married; and one day, walking in the street, suddenly saw a woman of majestic mien and with a very charming face. He was struck by her, admired her, followed her, reached her home, proposed, was accepted, and married at once. It was only on inquiry that he found she was poor—far poorer than himself. This young woman's name was Elizabeth Duret. Her marriage with Lebas was a very happy one, though the serenity of their sky was troubled by a few clouds; one of which was that they had no children. "When I married," Lebas would often say, "I acted exactly like a young man without thought. I gave my wife lace, diamonds, and fine dresses. The day after my marriage I had no more money. This made me serious. Without saying anything, I took the diamonds and lace in my hat-box out into the street and sold all. When I came back, I showed the money to my wife, and said, 'My dear (*ma bonne amie*), I have sold all your finery, but I have got money. I am going to spend it in copper plates. Be patient, keep up my courage. I ask nothing but the time to finish a few plates and bring them out, and I promise to give you back with interest what I have taken from you to-day, without your having had the time to enjoy it.' I kept my word. I shut myself up. I fagged away at the copper (*j'ai pioché le cuivre*). Madame Lebas attended to her household affairs, and swept her own staircase. In a short time I found myself in a position not only to give her back what I had taken from her, but to be useful to her in every way, and procure for her all the luxuries of life."

To acquire the fortune which he desired to make for the sake of his wife and his mother, Lebas hit upon the idea of establishing a business as an engraver—becoming a dealer, in fact. This required considerable capital, and compelled him to open a school. He collected all the young artists in whom he saw any signs of talent.